

Public reporting of physicians' financial relationships

ISSUE: Drug and device manufacturers, hospitals, and ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) frequently have financial relationships with physicians. Payers, patients, and the general public are often not aware of these relationships.

KEY POINTS: In the Commission's June 2008 Report to the Congress, we described the financial relationships between drug and device manufacturers and physicians. Although these financial ties can lead to advances in medical technology and patient care, they may also create conflicts between physicians' obligation to do what is best for their patients and the commercial interests of manufacturers. Requiring manufacturers to publicly report information on their financial relationships with physicians could discourage inappropriate arrangements. A public reporting system also would shed light on physician-industry relationships and enable payers and researchers to analyze whether they influence patterns of care. At this meeting, we will discuss draft recommendations for a public reporting law.

There has been rapid growth in physician investment in hospitals and ASCs, as well as other financial relationships between physicians and hospitals. Evidence suggests that some of these relationships increase volume within a market and affect physician referral patterns. The availability of information about these relationships would allow researchers to further examine their impact on volume and referrals. We will discuss draft recommendations related to public reporting of physicians' financial arrangements with hospitals and ASCs.

ACTION: Commissioners should provide feedback on the draft recommendations we will present.

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